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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 007947

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TAGS: PHUM PGOV CO

SUBJECT: NEW UNCHR REP PLEDGES CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP  
WITH GOC

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

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SUMMARY  
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¶11. (C) In an August 24 meeting, the Ambassador expressed the Embassy's commitment to a positive, constructive relationship with new UNCHR head in Colombia, Juan Pablo Corlazzoli. Corlazzoli said he had already met with GOC officials to set the agenda and tone of his tenure, with the UNCHR and GOC agreeing to hold monthly meetings and to communicate concerns privately. He said he was encouraged by GOC initiatives to combat human rights abuses, especially extrajudicial killings. Corlazzoli recognized the challenges of paramilitary demobilization and offered to support the GOC's peace efforts. End summary.

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AMBASSADOR AND CORLAZZOLI AGREE COOPERATION IS KEY  
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¶12. (C) In an August 24 meeting with the new representative of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNCHR) in Colombia, Juan Pablo Corlazzoli, the Ambassador stressed his commitment to have a positive, cooperative relationship with the UN office. The Ambassador said encouraging respect for human rights is a top U.S. priority in Colombia. He praised the important work of the UNCHR in this regard and voiced our desire to share information with the UN office. Corlazzoli said he shared the Ambassador's desire to work closely together. He also wanted to establish a good relationship with the GOC. Corlazzoli said he wanted a "transparent and cooperative" dialogue with the GOC. "We want to win the confidence of the government. Even if we have different opinions, we do not want confrontation," he explained. Corlazzoli said he had set up an "emergency channel" with the government for urgent human rights cases. The Ambassador asked that Corlazzoli consider that he had an emergency channel to the Embassy as well, and affirmed our willingness to add our voice to that of the UN office as appropriate.

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UNCHR AND GOC MAP OUT AGENDA  
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¶13. (C) Corlazzoli said he had met with various GOC officials, including Vice-President Francisco Santos, Foreign Minister Maria Consuelo Araujo and Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos, to discuss UNCHR and GOC engagement. The GOC had expressed its commitment to maintaining a UNCHR presence

in Colombia and had "reaffirmed" almost all of the UNCHR's current mandate. The only issue remaining was how to handle the Office's annual report, given the transition from the Human Rights Commission to the new Human Rights Council. He said he was pleased with the GOC's goal to "become the first country to get a "peer review" in the UN Human Rights Council.

¶4. (C) Corlazzoli explained the UNCHR and the GOC had agreed to hold quarterly meetings with the Vice-President, Foreign Minister, Defense Minister, Prosecutor General and Inspector General to review human rights issues. He would also have monthly sessions with the heads and deputies of agencies and ministries concerned with human rights. The first such meeting would take place in September. Corlazzoli said his office would stress technical assistance as well as human rights issues. He said he would communicate concerns privately to the GOC, explaining, "We will not talk to the GOC through the press."

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CORLAZZOLI ENCOURAGED BY GOC INITIATIVES AGAINST HR ABUSES  
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¶4. (C) Corlazzoli said he was "encouraged" by the GOC's initiative and political will to combat cases of human rights abuses, especially in the area of extrajudicial killings. The UNCHR has received no new complaints from some areas where such killings were an issue. (Comment: In a leaked communique to the GOC in April, the UNCHR expressed concern over extrajudicial killings in Antioquia Department. In July, the GOC announced 18 arrests of military personnel allegedly involved in 29 such cases. An UNCHR official told us there have been no complaints of extrajudicial killings in the Department since May. End Comment.) Still, Corlazzoli

said his office would raise five or six new cases of alleged extrajudicial killings by security forces in Putumayo Department with the GOC.

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UNCHR ROLE VIS-A-VIS CIVIL SOCIETY  
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¶5. (C) Corlazzoli said he had also met with NGO representatives, stressing the need to work closely with civil society such as human rights activists, religious groups, trade unionists, and business groups. In the NGO meeting, he had explained that the UNCHR's role is to "accompany" the process of human rights development, rather than to be a political actor. "We are not an NGO and have a different role to play," Corlazzoli explained.

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UNCHR AND THE PEACE PROCESS  
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¶6. (C) Corlazzoli, who worked on peace processes in Central America and Lebanon, said the UNCHR was ready to contribute to the peace process with all illegal armed groups. He recognized Colombia's "unique socio-political" context, and reiterated his desire to support GOC efforts to achieve peace. He said based on his experience, it was very difficult to balance peace and justice in such processes. Corlazzoli noted that in Central America in the 1980s and 1990s, all of the illegal armed groups benefited from complete amnesties.  
WOOD